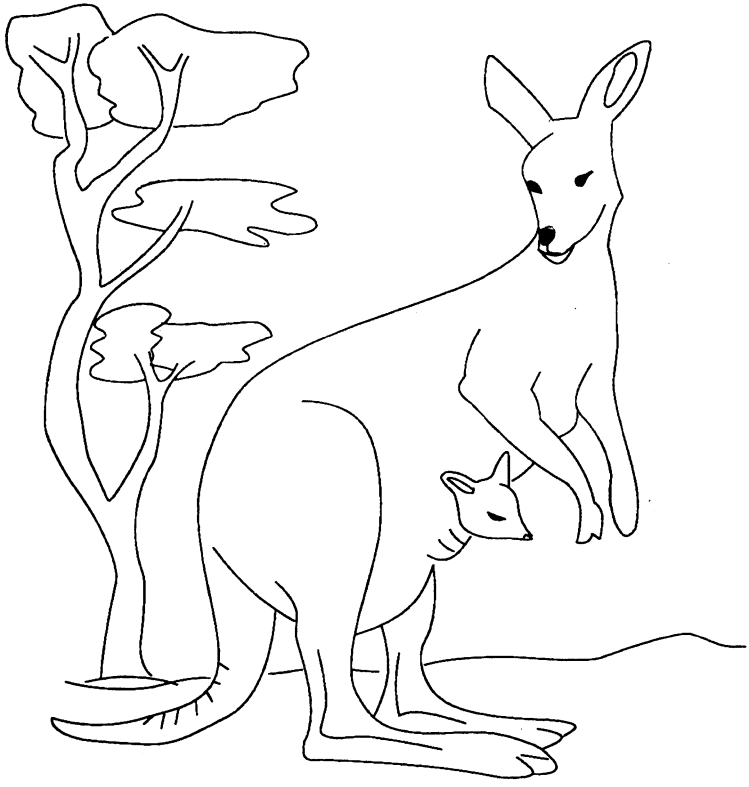
Canberra
Amiga
Users
SociEty
Inc

NEWSLETTER

June 1991



Aims of the Society

Canberra Amiga Users Society Incorporated (CAUSe) is an independent group (currently with about 300 members) formed for the benefit of people who own, use or are interested in the Commodore Amiga computer.

Benefits

Benefits include a bi-monthly newsletter, monthly meetings, discounts (see over page), bulletin board, Public Domain library, special interest groups and the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other users.

Subscriptions

Membership of the Society is available for an annual fee of $20. This fee may be paid, with a filled-in application form, either to the Membership Secretary at any of the monthly meetings or by mail to the Membership Secretary, PO Box 596, Canberra 2601.

Meetings

Meetings are held at 8 pm on the second Thursday of each month in either the Chifley Room or the auditorium at the Canberra Workers' Club in Childers St, Civic. The dates for the next few meetings are 13 June, 11 July and August 8.

The Beginners' Group runs from 7-8 pm prior to each meeting.

Details of upcoming meetings and main topics will be advertised in the Canberra Times "Fridge Door" the week of the meeting.

Bulletin board

The CAUSe bulletin board is online 24 hours and is maintained by our Sysop Peter McNeil and his team. To be a member of the bulletin board, you need to pay $5.00 additional yearly subscription.

The telephone number of the bulletin board is 2551469 and of the Sysop 2545545 (h).

Newsletter Contributions

BECAUSE is produced bi-monthly. Contributions to the newsletter can be submitted to the Editor via the newsletter area of the bulletin board, at the monthly meetings or to The Editor, PO Box 596, Canberra 2601.

Articles, reviews, comments and graphics are always welcome. Where possible, please provide them in Amiga readable format ie a disk file in ASCII, Wordperfect, Scribble!, Transcript or Amiga graphic format. The deadline for contributions to the newsletter is the 15th of the month preceding production.

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Advertising

	First Run	Rerun
Full page	$30	$20
Half page	$25	$15
Quarter page	$20	$10

Copy is to be provided to the Editor either in Amiga graphic file format or as appropriately sized printed copy. First Run prices are applicable if the Editor has to format the advertisement.

Production

The Editor for the newsletter was David Wilson. The copy was formatted by the DTP SIG using Professional Page v1.31 and printed on a Postscript printer by Desktop Utilities.

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CAUSe Committee (1991)

Director	Jeff Wilson 2477330 (h) 6-10pm
Vice Director	Simon Tow 2888362 (h) 6-8pm
Secretary	Lyle Williams 2814038 (h)
Membership Secretary	Berenice Jacobs 2547248 (h) 4-8pm
Treasurer	Terry Sullivan 2548950 (h)
Committee	Chris Townley 2545922 (h) 6-8pm
	Tony Hayman 2961894 (h) 7-10pm
	David Jacobs 2547248 (h) 5-7pm
	Adrian Tritschler 2574794 (h)
	Doug Stone 2551959 (h) 7-9pm
	Loy Winkler 2486545 (h) 4-10pm
	Andrew Boundy 2916971 (h) 7-10pm
	Gordon Owttrim 2972692 (h) 6-8pm
	Mark Trenery 2861358 (h) 7-10pm

Special Interest Groups

Each of the following members is coordinating a Special Interest Group (SIG) in the listed topic. If you are interested in joining one of these groups and getting more out of your Amiga, either contact them direct or indicate your interest at the next monthly meeting:

James Dempsey	2922145	Modula 2
Connie Peisley	2952767	Education
Jeff Wilson	2477330	C
David Wilson	2918324	Desktop Publishing
Rob Vander Meer	2417113	Video
Jeff Wilson	2477330	CanDo

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This Month's Cover

Kangaroo Scene

A Professional Page structured drawing by Jeff Wilson

Director's letter to Members.

I thought it appropriate to write a note in this Newsletter letting you, the Member know why you should continue to support the User Group and also what you can do as a Member to help with the expansion of the group.

We have just had our first meeting as the new committee and although it wasn't as good as I would have liked, it still showed an improvement over past meetings according to people who spoke to me on completion of the meeting.

If you have any suggestions to help the group or in your opinion there is something lacking that you would like to see, just call one of the committee members so that it can be bought up for discussion at the next committee meeting.

We have things planned up to November at this stage for all the Main Meetings ending with a Open Day in November which will hopefully become a regular annual event for the club.

In June we will be entertained by a demonstration by Parath Computers. They will be showing us a few of the new software releases available for the Amiga, some of which have to be seen to be believed, or so I'm told by Steve from Parath.

July will bring us the long awaited Demo from our own Desktop Video SIG. Robert promises that this will be one Demo that is not to be missed with all of the Demo homegrown. Ring Robert if you would like to join the Desktop Video SIG and help with the Demo.

The main topic of the August Meeting will be a visit from Chris Dunbar from Commodore in Sydney who will be speaking about the upcoming release of the Amiga PC Vision. He will be also available for comments and questions regards the Amiga and Commodore.

Bill Fulton will be back in September as our guest speaker. He will talk on his favourite subject, the care of your PC. This was a very popular session last year when he was here and should prove to be again this year with many questions to be answered I'm sure.

October is not finalised at this stage but I will let you know as soon as it is and as I said above, November should be our main month of the year with Open Day planned (providing we get the volunteers to help with the organising).

Talking of the Open Day, we still badly need volunteers to help with the organising of it and volunteers for other facets of it. Even if you cannot help directly but would like to contribute something towards it, call David Wilson and let him know what you can do so that he can make a note about it and call you when your talent is wanted.

Also still in need of volunteers is the proposed hardware SIG.If you are willing to help, then give your address to a committee member to pass along to the appropriate person. The type of volunteers needed at the moment are people capable of learning hardware repair or people who can already repair hardware. This SIG will be run as a instructional course with the view of teaching more people how to repair the Amiga. The side benefit of this is that people will be able to book their machines in to be fixed or upgraded by these people for the cost of parts. At this stage there will be a yearly fee to join the Hardware SIG for TAFE administrative reasons.

Well, that's about enough for now. Remember this is a User Group that runs and functions by members who volunteer their services and time, so please become a member who also volunteers a little bit of time for the benefit of the Club. Ring today and offer your help where you can.

Jeff Wilson

Ã(!ÃRS 232 problems

Gordon Owttrim

At the back of all Amigas is a socket for RS232 communications sometimes called the serial I/O port orinput/output port. This can be used to connect a number of devices, printers, plotters and probably most often modems. This port is a very useful part of the Amiga but it has one drawback - it connects to the very heart of the computer.

I found this out the hard way the first time I decided to use it. I was able to borrow a modem from work and so I decided to tryout the larger world of telecommunications. I also borrowed their 232 cable to connect to the port and the modem. That was my first problem! - what I did not know was that the cable was faulty and that most of the pins on the cable plug were shorted together. I switched off my Amiga 1000 and connected up the modem to the port with this faulty cable. The effect on switch on was that I was confronted with a blank screen with no Kickstart Icon. After switching off and removing the cable, everything appeared to come good. After checking everything including the cable with a testmeter, discovering the problem and replacing the cable, I was then up and running and connecting to local bulletin boards. I then noticed that the internal clock was no longer updating. I could call up the nice round clock from workbench ok but it would just sit there jammed at what ever time I had entered during startup.

This was because the bad cable had shorted one of the PIA chips and was only partly working as it should do; a replacement chip fixed the problem.

I got the communication bug and decided to invest in my own modem and I enjoyed connecting to the local and sometimes the interstate Amiga bulletin boards. However my new found interest was not to last too long. I usually disconnected the phone line from the modem after I had finished a session but the modem I had allowed for another connection to a normal phone and sometimes it was convenient to leave everything connected. This was my next problem because, during a very heavy thunderstorm, the phone line was struck by lightning. The result to my horror was that it blew out the modem and the computer which just gave me a blank screenon switch on.

The result was that my 1000 was just uneconomic to repair due to the damage. I was lucky in that my insurance partly covered a replacement but it was a lesson learned the hard way.

Motions at June Meeting

The following motions are to be put to a vote at the June CAUSe meeting:

1. That a complete copy of the membership database be maintained by the Secretary to ensure an offsite backup of the database.

2. That a copy of the database be supplied to Andrew Boundy (a Committee member) to allow him to build a fully menu-driven version for easier operation by upcoming Membership Secretaries. The data to be destroyed by Andrew on completion.

There's a Phoenix in there (...and a bear as well)

by Miles Goodhew.

There came a knock at the door, as I slumbered, I thought "God, I bet it's another delivery of parts for my father's business", and rolled over. The knocking persisted, in the same loud fashion that couriers knock, having become fed up with deaf or sleeping recipients. So I got up, and answered the door, wearing my canary-yellow pyjamas, and blue terry-toweling shave coat, and, you guessed it, there was a courier at the door. I wearily reached out for the receipt book, and casually glanced down at what I presumed would be slightly battered box of motors or lip-seals, or some other part required.

To my surprise, there was a neat, square box, with "Phoenix" printed all over it. My heart jumped. I almost tore the page, scrawling my signature, raced in with the parcel, and proceeded to be foiled in an attempt to open the damn thing.

When I did get it open, underneath the first sheet of foam rubber was a photocopied manual, with a protective cover, and a plastic pouch containing a test disk, "phoenix" sticker, insulating tape and spare jumper connecters. Underneath the second piece of foam, was the board itself, sitting in a static-proof bag, on a third piece of foam rubber. The board was compact, with lots and lots of various-sized empty sockets for future expansion. There were also a few pieces of prophetic wisdom written on the board, along with Andrew Wilson's signature, and close supporters names printed on the lower side.

I put the box back together, and forced myself to wait the two weeks, when Peter McNeil had told me I could get it assembled at the hardware sig meeting. When the meeting did come around, there wore lots of people with hardware to be fixed, probably an equal number of people who didn't have any hardware to be fixed, and just the one person fixing (Peter).

After a few people had their boxes looked at, it was my turn. I had already pulled off the top cover (as most people know, there are several signatures, and a paw print embossed on the inside top cover of the A1000's case), and RF shielding. Peter then stripped off a few more bit of plastic casing, which were whipped outside by someone or another for a wash (which, believe me, they needed).

The next task is simple to explain, but fairly tedious and laborious in reality: Peter detached the old A1000 motherboard on a grounding mat. He then removed the five chips needed for the phoenix board (complicated by the fact that I had an old-style daughter board with some PLA chips on it. This is called NTSC, and seems to have absolutely no effect on the video display, which was PAL). Having removed the chips, the phoenix board was removed from its bag (replaced with the old board, which may eventually be used as a platform for our Amiga BBS), and placed on the mat. The chips were added, and the board re-attached to the casing and connectors.

The box was re-assembled (a bit of a dilemma, because some screws were missing when we started, and there were even less when it came to this point),

plugged in and the test disk inserted. The disk booted - I was relieved... but then the computer crashed with a number 3 guru (Address error) - my heart sank. After a bit of fiddling, Peter noticed that it ran without a hitch when the RF shielding was removed, and put down the error to the shielding touching something it shouldn't, somewhere at the front of the box (where some screws were missing). After a repositioning of the screws (picking the least inconvenient holes not to have screws), it was plugged-in again, and worked fine - I was happy.

After the box was re-assembled, there remained one task: to attach the phoenix sticker to the front of the box, I did this with pride. After a fair bit of general mayhem (DAC fritzing the BBS, people wiping files left right and center, clandestine photocopying, etc.), I took my computer home, plugged it in, and used it, it was great, my sound was at last better then the A500 sitting next to it (better amp + speakers), and I had 1Mb of chip ram. Alas, a week or so later, it stopped working again in a similar fashion to the previous problem - I was depressed again.

I phoned up Peter, and he graciously allowed me to come over, and he'd have a look at the problem. I popped around with the computer, and mentioned that my brother had found a discrepancy in jumper connector positions. Peter spent a hell of a long time trying to find the connectors mentioned in the manual (they're all over the place, and not in any order). He couldn't find anything there that could cause the problem, so he replaced the missing screws and tried it out. It worked, and is still working, to this day - I am now happy again!

MHG.

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Hardware Hackers Herald V1.7

by Peter McNeil

I'm back, for this edition at least. This edition of the HHH I will correct crook clocks that have clashed with corrupt code, and once again portray the ill health of some computer repair firms in the ACT.

Crook Clocks.

I was rung up on a Sunday arvo by this bloke who wanted to know what he could do about his crook real time clock? He then went on to tell me a bit about the history of events since the demise of the ticker. "I ran a bit of software, that crashed" he said, "and my clock was no longer there!" I listened as he told me that he had asked around and was told (I don't know by whom) that he would have to replace his real time clock chip. So off he went, bought a chip, pulled apart his A501 memory expansion and replaced the thing. Well low and behold, it still didn't work! Which isn't really surprising as the chip was not at fault in the first place.

What had happened? When the software crashed it had written to various memory locations in the computer, one of these was obviously the real time clock. What it wrote to the real time clock would have been understood as a command that stopped it from replying when called. This is quite common. To fix the problem simply type from the CLI "setclock reset" which will set up the clock properly again and all will be well (though you'll probably have to reset the time again). Oh yeah, sometimes you have to repeat the command a few times to get it to work and reset the machine afterwards, depending on what the trashing software did.

Servicing the Beast

I have lately had an plethora of problem service stories. I'm not going to go into to much detail about these stories as I believe they are going to be adequately covered by the people involved in other articles featuring in this eminent rag. I am however going to make a small plea.

It strikes me as incongruous that any "service" agent should lack so much professional service as to not even manage to put the correct screws back into the machine. This is a small thing to ask for. Not only have they, on occasions, put the wrong type of screw back, but they have put several different types back in. Surely it is not difficult to keep the screws that belong to a machine in a plastic bag WITH the machine whilst servicing it? And if they can't remember how the screws went in then they certainly shouldn't be trying to fix the thing! Someone ventured that it was because the 500 has those new fangled TORX screws that they don't put them back, but I can't see much credence in that either, as anyone can pick up a TORX screw driver at Woolies or Dick Smith for the price of a normal screw driver.

The problems that have been coming from one firm lately however haven't just been simple wrong screw problems, they have been rather more serious.

One machine went in with a "Green screen" problem, which in most cases is a problem with the Agnus or Chip memory. The owner was told that two of the pins on the memory expansion, the 12 volt and the 5 volt line were bent and touching when the machine had been powered up at the shop and that this had "Blown up the mother board" or some such thing. Now I can't be sure that I have the whole story here but it is almost impossible for the 12

volt and 5 volt pins to touch, they are two pins apart with an earth in between. If either of these pins touched earth then the machine just wouldn't work, it would not blow up but the fuse may blow in the power supply. The 12 volt and -12 volt line could touch but once again this would not affect much as both lines in this case would be bought down to around zero volts and blow a fuse. All in all it is an unlikely scenario especially as the pins looked in top shape to me, something that a square metal pin would have a hard time doing after being bent enough to short across two pins.

The motherboard however was not in top shape when I looked at it. The service-person had obviously decided to replace a few chips to discover what was wrong. This is fair enough, so long as you don't destroy the printed circuit board (PCB) in the process, which is precisely what had been done. It is also fair enough to break the odd trace on the PCB so long as you fix it, there was no evidence of this having been attempted either. All in all the motherboard had been destroyed by someone in an attempt to "service" it. (It took me about 12 hours to repair this machine which, if I was charging for it, would have cost the customer $768 at $64 per hour.)

I am not going to discuss the rights or wrongs of this actual case, or the way it was handled by both the firm and the customer, however I might just make this observation. It would seem to me that one would reasonably expect to receive back from a service agent your machine either fixed or in the same condition you took it to them (within reason). It is the service centres responsibility to ensure the equipments safety from such things as power serges, theft, and maltreatment whilst it is in their care. If the service agents contract (conditions of service) negate their responsibility for these things then you should take your equipment elsewhere.

It is about time we as an Amiga community started to demand a much better deal from computer service centres, after all they charge like wounded bulls for what amounts to the service a bull might give.

Editor's Note

Peter's article has been edited (emasculated) to remove the name(s) of the ofending service agent(s) after I received legal advice on the possibility of defamation action if the original version of the article was published. This is a great pity as there is nothing like adverse publicity to force a company to lift its game!

Stay tuned!

Classifieds

For Sale

The following software is still in its original boxes with manuals. Prices are as listed or best offer.

Amos the Creator (never opened)	$90
The Hunt for Red October	$30
F10 Stealth Fighter	$50
Mavis BeaconTeachers Typing	$50
Shadow of the Beast T-shirt (brand new)	$10

Philip Russell 2863501

Public Domain Corner

with David Wilson

Uedit

Uedit is a text editor with many wordprocessing features.

The Shareware version available on Fish disk 415 has some limitations butenables you to "get the flavor" and use Uedit productively while encouraging you to become a registered user. It has a 4-file limit and it will not let you save a customised Uedit configuration or a macro to disk. It does, however, come with a 12 page manual (and on-line Hypertext Help) showing you how useful an editor Uedit is.

You can use Uedit immediately without reading much of the manual. The hardest feature for me to get used to at the beginning was the use of the "cursor" arrows for scrolling and the keypad keys for moving the cursor. The former allow you to scan the file without losing your position in the file (keypad5 returns you to the cursor position) while the keypad commands (with shift-, alt-and ctrl-) move the cursor by line, by screen, by page etc.. Scrolling through a document using the arrows (without the cursor moving) was strange at first but rapidly became natural. This is certainly now my preferred way of moving through wp documents.

Every command, even the menus and mouse button commands, can be reconfigured either temporarily or permanently. Just about anything the user does not like can be changed. There are configurations available (on an extras disk) which emulate Scribble! or Wordstar (although why anyone would want to emulate Wordstar on the Amiga is beyond me!).

By clicking on the title bar with the left mouse button, Uedit can be reduced to a "tiny window". Another click on the menu bar expands Uedit to full size. This is necessary as Uedit does not use "front-back" gadgets nor a right side scroll bar. Scrolling is done either by the "cursor" arrows or by using the "up" and "down" gadgets at the top of the screen; scrolling is fast and smooth using the gadgets.

You can run Uedit immediately in Workbench by clicking its icon or from the CLI by typing "Run UES file1 file2 file3 etc".

The ARexx interface allows you to send commands or text to Uedit from the CLI or from host programs, thereby controlling Uedit from outside. It also allows Uedit to exchange data with ARexx host programs.

The "spell-checking" version of Uedit has all the usual features of modern spelling checkers (although it is certainly a "manual" model - vs the "automatic" checker in programs like Excellence!) The only irritation is the Americanised spelling.

Uedit allows up to 8 split windows (to show other buffers), colored (hilite and invert) regions, normal or interlace screen and RGB color tuning. the program has full sets of cut/copy/paste/clear capabilities for regular, inverted, or hilited as well as columnar text, hypertext features, on-line help, page-making commands and powerful search- replace commands.

The registered users' program has 100 buffers which can be used for holding documents and bits and pieces of text. The lowest buffer numbers (usually the first 20 as a practical maximum but this can be changed via the menu) are used for holding documents.

If you want an "inner" left margin temporarily, simply indent the text and select "Autoindent", so that succeeding lines stay at the same indentation. This is a real boon for scientific/technical documents where there are "levels" of information ie headings, sub-headings,sub- sub-headings which must be laid out correctly. This is one of the main reasons why I use Uedit; the only other Amiga word processor with a similar feature is Wordperfect and it has too many faults. Uedit also has an outline feature.

The latest version of Uedit (v2.6c) costs $US50 from the author in the USA and runs under AmigaDOS v2.0. A PC version is also available but I have had no problems porting Uedit files to MSDOS word processors for laser printing.

Fred Fish 429 contains a variety of configurable material for Uedit and some improvements to existing Uedit features.

Overall, I believe that Uedit is an excellent text editor which integrates well into the Amiga environment.

Upcoming Meetings

June

Parath Computers will be demonstrating new software.

The Beginners' Group will be an "Intermediate" Group for this meeting.

July

Demonstration by the Desktop Video SIG

August

Commodore demonstrating new hardware products and answering questions.

CAUSe Public Domain Collection

The PD programs available in the collection vary from very impressive business, graphics and sound programs through to demonstrations of the Amiga's capabilities, games, utilities and examples of programming for the Amiga.

The group's FRED FISH collection - now up to disk 490 - was chosen as it is the longest running public domain collection for the Amiga. This collection has since become a byword for high quality public domain software due to the time put into building the collection and its wide distribution.

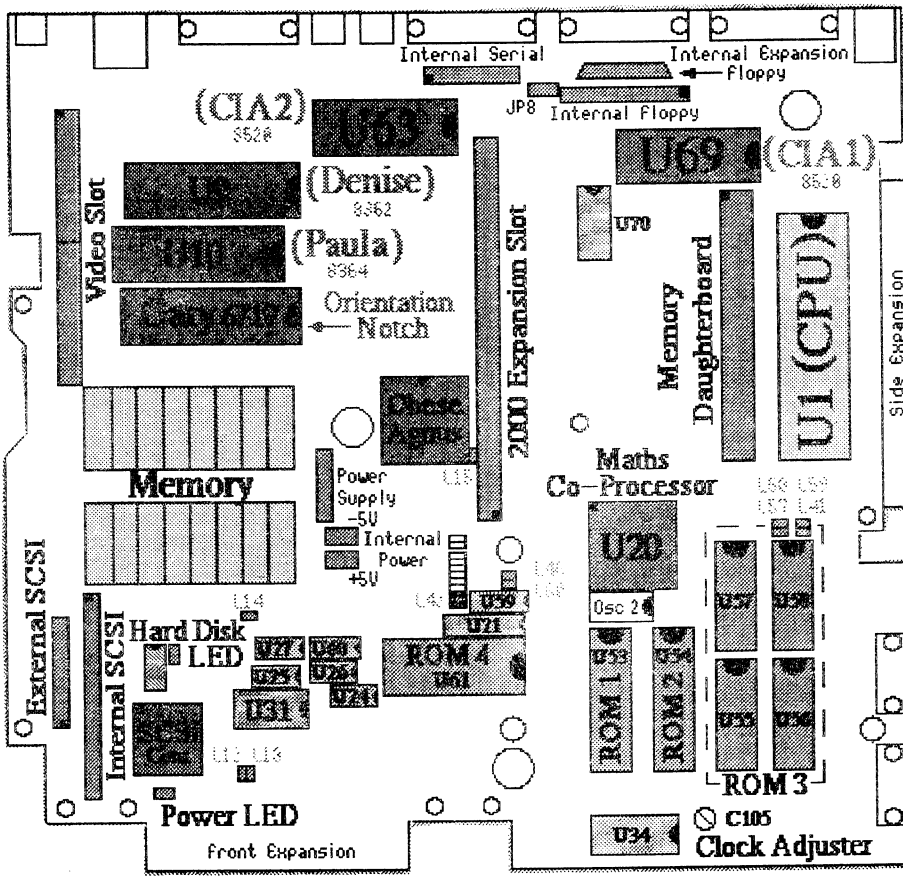
The following people are librarians of the User Group's collection of PD software:

Name	Location	Phone no.
Simon Tow	Fisher	2888 362 (h)
Lawrence Coombs	Aranda	2515 523 (h)
Jeff Wilson	Hackett	2477 330 (h)
Berenice Jacobs	Page	2547 248 (h)

You have the choice of buying the disks or swapping them for some unused acceptable NAME brand disk that you own. The copying fee for each disk is $1 to cover the librarian's costs.

A public domain CATALOGUE on a database called AQUARIUM is available from the librarians for the price of the disk or for a disk swap. There is no copying charge for the FISH catalogue or the Aquarium as both are regarded as advertising for the public domain.

For those who want other than the Fish collection, Berenise Jacobs holds a large collection of alternate public domain. Contact Berenice for more details.



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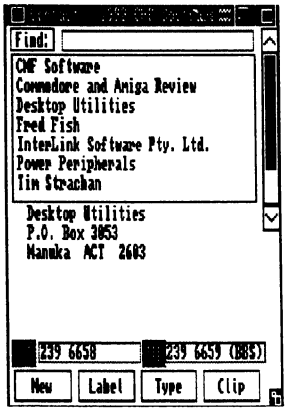

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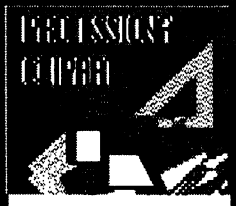

Vols 1 & 2
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INCOME		**EXPENDITURE**	
	$		$
Bank Balance 1.3.91	3078	Investment	2000
Estimated Membership	2640	Depreciation Fund	500
Menbers & BBS	1125		
Megadisk Sales	750	**BUDGET EXPENDITURE**	
Disk sales	250	Administration	
		Advertising	250
		Printing	300
		Postal Box Rental	115
		Stationary/Postage	200
		Miscellaneous	78
		Library	
		Megadiscs	1400
		Society Disks	600
		PD Disks	600
		Newsletter	
		Prod'n & Postage	2100
		BBS	
		Telecom	175
		Electricity	125
		Miscellaneous	
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24 Bit Colour and the ColorBurst - what are they?

By Mark Trenery

First of all for those people that may have seen, heard or read a little about 24-bit colour capabilities, I'll attempt to explain what it is and how it might benefit an Amiga user.

Basically 24-bit colour image files may contain up to 16,777,216 colours, or more commonly abbreviated to 16.7 M. Of course this figure represents the size of the palette, that is the image may be constructed using a palette containing 16.7 million colours. The reason being that most monitors typically have about 64,000 pixels, so even if every pixel were a different colour, the total colours on screen would only be 64,000.

On an Amiga without extra display devices these images may be manipulated and image processed by programs such as the Art Department. Although the Amiga cannot display them in 24-bit colour, internally it can keep track of all that data and process it with the results displayed in the most applicable Amiga resolution - usually using 4096 colours in HAM lo-res or lo-res interlace.

An explanation of how the Amiga stores the colour information for a bitmap image, i.e. normal IFF format, that follows applies to 24-bit colour images as well. All Amiga images are described as having a number of bitplanes. The colour information for each pixel is held in these bitplanes, so that a one bitplane image has two colours. (The values in that bitplane can be either 1 or 0, on or off - the binary system that represents the lowest level at which computers operate). Add another bitplane and you double the number of possibilities to 4, hence a 2 bitplane image contains 4 colours, 3 bitplanes - 8, 4 bitplanes - 16, 5 bitplanes - 32. If we continue all the way to 24 bitplanes we get to our 16.7 million colours. Perhaps now you can understand why these images are typically around the 700K - 1 MB file size.

This system of colour data and storage has actually been around for some time, although it's relatively new to the Amiga. Over the last year a number of companies has been developing and releasing display hardware that can accept this 24-bit data and display an image using a 16.7 million palette. This devices have uses relating to video production, animation or titling. The high quality signal possessing this much colour information is suitable for images requiring subtle shading or photo-realistic objects/scenes.

Obviously another application closely related to 24-bit colour is that of frame grabbing. An image captured from video cannot only be displayed with exacting colour, but edited and processed through 24-bit paint software. Usually the edited image data is 'downloaded' from the frame grabber/display board and later transferred back for display in 24-bit. However a number of boards being released recently have the capability to allow editing of an image in real-time while displaying it in 24-bit. The ColorBurst, an Australian designed board, allows this to be done.

These boards are as much an output device as an an input device. The growing popularity of 3D design and rendering/ray-tracing software has

moved the market along - producing more spectacular software boasting features and effects that astound almost anyone. Packages like Imagine, Real 3D, Sculpt 4D, 3D Professional etc. have a multitude of functions that can be applied to producing 24-bit images for display from a 24-bit board. Adding single-frame recording capable equipment allows one to produce professional animation, once the domain of exclusive companies possessing hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment.

The use of 24-bit colour files extends beyond that for video. Another suitable area would be desktop publishing. Commodore have now approved a 24-bit IFF standard for the Amiga. This means the flexibility and ease with which most of us work with normal IFF pictures can also include the new 24-bit files. Professional Page V2.0 now includes built-in support for 24-bit IFF, so that any digitised or rendered image can be imported into documents, resized, cropped and output to colour printers, postscript colour capable devices or even colour separated for professional printing. The requirements for working with 24-bit files are basically that you need a fast and big computer - not that an A500 can't do it, but extra memory, a hard drive and perhaps an accelerator board would be needed.

The ColorBurst is a 24-bit display device that can display images using a 16.7 million colour palette with a resolution of 768 x 580 pixels. It was developed in Australia by Gary Rayner and is being marketed by MAST Memory and Storage Technology. The unit connects to the RGB port of any Amiga model and is genlock compatible. A pass-through of the video is provided for connection of an Amiga monitor or multisync monitor. It remains transparent to the system allowing one to work as normal without needing to disconnect it. I have not seen or used a ColorBurst myself, so the following information has been compiled from a number of sources.

The ColorBurst includes a graphics processor that generates real-time video effects. For example a video priority stencil for mixing normal Amiga graphics with ColorBurst graphics. The workbench can be displayed with a 24-bit colour image behind it. Since the ColorBurst contains 1.5 MB of video ram it does not use Amiga memory. Other effects include palette mapping such as fading 24-bit colour images in and out to other palettes and colour cycling, strobing, solarizing and fading images from/to positive/negative. It is possible to have continuous 24-bit scrolling, useful for video titling, that is either in the vertical or horizontal planes.

An impressive aspect of the ColorBurst operation is that it allows for painting or image processing in 24-bit colour in real-time. The picture update is instant with no delay. Up to four overscan 24-bit images can be loaded into the ColorBurst's ram. By reducing the number of bitplanes (colours) more screens can reside in the ColorBurst's ram. 12 bitplanes - 2 to 8 images, 8 bitplanes - 3 to 12 images, and even up to 96 1 bitplane images. I would assume that any and all images preloaded to this 1.5 MB of ram would be immediately accessible for display.

Animation is possible with the ColorBurst, but there are limitations. First of all full screen 24-bit files are, as stated before, quite large. There is obvious problems associated with moving megabytes of data into the Amiga fast enough - simply not possible

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with hard drives. As a matter of interest the DMA transfer rate from the Amiga to ColorBurst is 5.5 MB per second. Instead partial updates of the overall picture is possible, similar to how DeluxePaint III animates. Gary Rayner, designer, has said that MAST has animated a 150 x 100 pixel 24-bit screen at 20 frames per second.

ColorBurst includes the CBPaint program, a slideshow program, Sculpt, Silver, and DigiView loaders and an image processing program. At this stage no animation software is included, however MAST will be offering a single-frame recording service for outputting images directly to tape.

Some specifications for the ColorBurst follow:

Vide Output: Separate Red, Green, Blue, and sync 1 volt p-p into 75 ohm load. 16.777 million colour per pixel.

Video scan rate: PAL 15.625 Khz line rate, 50 Hz vertical.

Date transfer rate: 5.5 Megabytes/second via DMA (Amiga)

Genlock Encoder compatibility: compatible with all external genlocks and encoders to encode RGB, component, S-VHS, or composite video.

The recommended retail price of ColorBurst is AUS $999 from MAST.

For further information about the ColorBurst contact MAST Tel (02) 281 7411.

Note: the retail price in the USA appears to be $US495 - Editor.

Help Service

The following is a list of members who have volunteered to share their knowledge and experience with other members. If you have a problem or just need a bit of advice in any of the areas listed, please ring during the hours shown.

Paul Martin	10-10 M-Su	2532121	what's happening
Simon Tow	6-7 pm M-F	2888362	hard disks, Digiview
Gary Duncan	6-8 pm M-F	2319801	general C programming
Frank Keighley	6-7 pm M-F	2396658	laser printing, desktop publishing
Peter McNeil	6-8 pm M-F	2545545	bulletin board
Doug Stone	6-9 pm M-Su	2516347	general help
James Dempsey	7-9 pm M-Su	2922145	Modula 2
Robert Vander Meer	6-8 pm M-F	2417113	desktop video
Wayne Rochester	6-10 pm M-F	2479093	assembler, general programming
Fred Pollum	6-8 pm M-Su	2810842	video, digitising
Michael Thong	6-8 pm M-Su	2822323	hardware interfaces
Colin Vance	6-8 pm M-Su	2511087	beginners AmigaDOS
Andrew Boundy	8-10pmM-Th	2916971	Superbase Wordperfect

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CAUSe OPEN DAY

As Jeff Wilson has noted in his Director's Report, the Group is looking at organising an Open Day on a Saturday or Sunday in November.

For those unaware, an open day brings together CAUSe members, SIGs, interested members of the public, local Amiga hardware and software dealers and, hopefully, Commodore representatives.

It's an opportunity:

- for people to talk about and play with Amigas
- for people to be shown the benefits of CAUSe membership
- for SIGs to show off their projects,
- for dealers to demonstrate new hardware and software and to make some (discounted) sales
- for sales of PD and CAUSe disks
- for question and answer sessions.

The exhibition would be held in either the Workers' Club auditorium (where we hold the monthly meetings) or somewhere like the Griffin Centre. Stalls for SIGs and dealers would be set up around a central area and other rooms may be set aside for particular demonstrations. An entry fee would be charged and the Group may even make a small profit.

But most importantly, we would bring a greater awareness of the Amiga's capabilities to CAUSe members and to the general public with resultant benefits to us.

For this to become a reality, we need VOLUNTEERS to organise things beforehand and to help on the day. There are lots of things to do and we consider that a team of 8 to 10 would be ideal. Your reward (aside from a warm inner glow) would be free entry to the exhibition. Could you please contact any of the following Committee members or me if you can help.

Tony Hayman 2961894 (h)

Doug Stone 255 1959 (h)

Loy Winkler 248 6545 (h)

David Jacobs 254 7248 (h)

David Wilson 2918324 (h)

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